The Culture Fit Interview

The most successful hires at any company will fit both the job and the workplace culture - thus the importance of shining at that nerve-wracking culture fit interview. How can you prepare to impress at this critical step?

Here is your interview cheat sheet with three behavioral questions commonly asked during culture fit interviews, three examples and three simple yet powerful tips! To listen to both good and bad examples of answers along with critiques, check out this video. (Good examples from the video are scripted below)

The 3 questions we'll demonstrate with are:

1. **Why do you want to work here?**

2. **What are you most proud of in your work history?**

3. **How do you deal with (a specific situation)?**

Let's get down to some examples.

1. "Why do you want to work at our company?"

Sample response:
I like that you deal with some of the most technical problems in machine learning. I was talking with my friend Tony the other day, who is part of your engineering team, and was impressed by all the interesting tools he got to play within in natural language processing. I look forward to growing with the company and exploring the frontier of NLP problems.

Practical Tip 1:

Know your role. When you apply for a company, do your research on:
- the company culture
- problems they face
- accomplishments they've made
- who their customers are
- their organizational structure
- What technology/methodology they use

Other similar questions you should apply this to:
Why do you want to work as X?
What are you main considerations when choosing a company?
How will this role challenge you?

Useful Language Tips:

This company is an industry leader in … and offers great mentorship opportunities around ...
This startup is scrappy and rewards risk-taking. I heard from a friend (insert example)
I'm particularly impressed by your mission of (insert mission), *and* (that mission) *has always been an important part of my professional development.*

Sample response:

I take the most pride in organizing a weekly peer learning session among the engineers in my department. Each engineer used to all build different features individually, and sometimes we would end up building a component that had already been built before. The individualistic nature of our work hampered our productivity. Since I launched the peer learning session, everybody can share the tools they used and, more importantly, reusable modules they have built. This learning session has become one of the most beloved meetings in my team, and has largely contributed to us becoming the most productive engineer team in the company.

Practical Tip 2:

Know yourself. We all have different personalities, working styles, and job histories. Before each job interview, spend some time thinking about what's most interesting about you in relation to the job you are applying for.

Other similar questions you should apply this to:
How would your co-workers describe your work style and contributions in your former job?
When you work with a team, describe the role that you are most likely to play on the team.
Where/when/how do you do your best work?

Useful Language Tips:

- You are very data driven and figured out a solution that seems counter-intuitive
- You are customer centric, built relationships, and secured an important client
- You are very good at coordinating a team with diverse backgrounds and opinions, and achieved success that nobody could pull off individually

3. How do you deal with (*Situation X)*?
ex. Our company is expanding rapidly and is constantly evolving to meet market demands. How well do you handle change?

Sample response:

I love a fast-paced working environment, and think that it pushes me to grow faster as well. Previously I was working with an ad agency to manage their in house experimentation systems. The system was designed to only support 1 variant at a time. As the company grew, I noticed that we got more and bigger customers that requested mutl-variant experimentations through customer interviews and in-bound requests. While it was challenging to build such a complex system with automatic reporting, I understood that it was a necessary step to unlock the next level of growth, so I re-prioritized our feature requests and put together a convincing demo with my team. That demo ultimately paved way for a few multi-million dollar deals.

Practical Tip 3:

Tell a story. One way to stand out with your answer is provide a story arc in your response to a situational question, covering the **A.situation, B.action**, and **C.result**.
- A. Identify a situation you've experienced that relates to the question
- B. Explain what action you took
- C. Explain what you accomplished or learned from that experience.

The same story telling method can be applied to numerous other questions like:
- *How do you deal with critical feedback?*
- *What do you do when you disagree with your boss?*
- *How do you manage conflict with coworkers?*

Useful Language Tips:

Previously when I was working with…I noticed that...
While it was challenging to implement ...(action)
That experience/development ultimately paved way for (result or lesson learned)

Your turn

There you have it, three sample interview questions, answers and tips to help you prove to your future employer that you are a match for the job. By using these tips to practice, you will not only meet the job qualifications but will prove that you can meld with the rest of the team as well.